

# Litter Does More Than Look Bad!



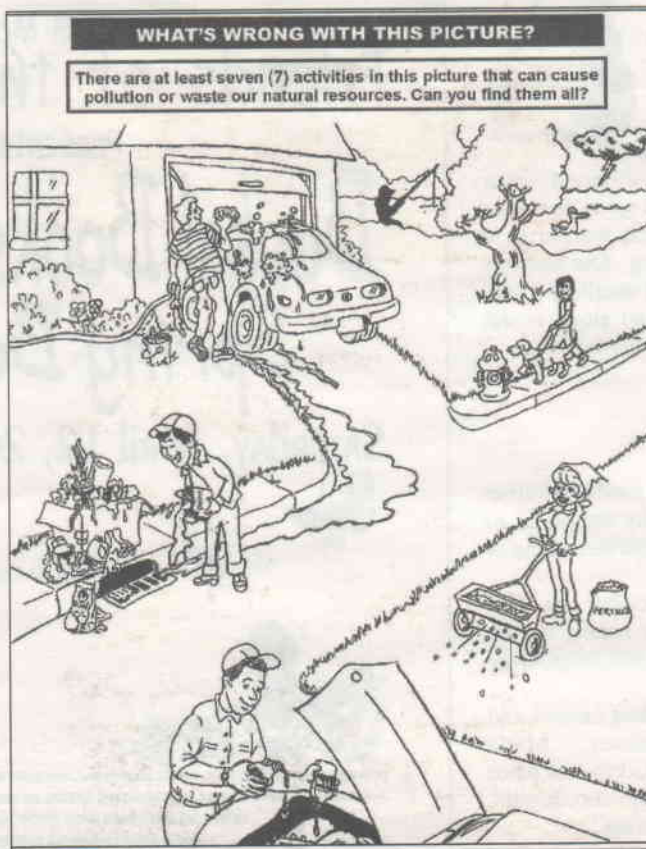
You may have seen plastic bags, cups, cigarette butts or even just paper blowing through the streets, or stuck on a fence. Not only does it look bad, but litter has many negative consequences for the City. The City of South El Monte (City) is constantly cleaning up litter that's illegally and inappropriately disposed on streets and property. City Manager, Anthony Ybarra, recently noted that the City faces stiff fines for litter if not cleaned up. "The City is held responsible for littering by the State Water Agency," he said.

So how does a water agency get involved in litter? As seen in the photograph, much of this litter migrates to what is called an inlet along the street curb. This inlet provides an easy way for storm water to pass from streets into waterways and subsequently to the ocean. The trouble is that storm water, and other water as well, will carry a lot of this litter causing significant environmental damage. In fact, one of the local recreational areas, Legg Lake, is severely impacted by litter, resulting in an order by the state on the City to help clean up the litter at a potential cost of thousands, if not millions of dollars.

To help address this issue, the City recently announced a new plan to curb littering. The City has been installing filters on the inlets to catch some of the debris. But, the City is looking to more rigorously enforce local anti-littering laws, to stop residents and businesses from littering since it is costly to monitor and maintain these inlet filters.

Moreover, if the littering isn't significantly reduced, the state water agency could impose millions of dollars in fines on the City. And who pays the fines? All of us as citizens end up paying!

The next time you eat at a fast food restaurant, make sure that you place all your trash in a litter can. And if you smoke, don't drop your butt on the ground. If you're cutting your lawn, don't blow or sweep the clippings into the street, and try to be tidy when visiting the park. If all of us just do one or two simple things, then we can stop litter in its tracks. Check out the cartoon and try to figure out ways to curb littering. Call the City to find out more!



APRIL 2008 ❖ Published Monthly by the City of South El Monte



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